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The Economic Impacts of Restoring Wisconsin's Sheboygan River

Quick Read

- The average Sheboygan River angler spends \$146 per fishing day.
- Out-of-state anglers spend \$338 per fishing day while at the Sheboygan River.
- The estimated direct spending of anglers on the Lake Michigan tributary sport fishery is \$21,461,127.

Overview

An economic impact study was developed to assess activity related to restoration and remediation of the Sheboygan River. This study, initiated by the University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, was intended to develop baseline data for 2013 with similar studies planned in 2015 and 2017. The first part of the study estimated the economic impacts of sport fishing on the Sheboygan River and angler perceptions of the cleanup.

In fall 2013 and spring 2014, 140 anglers were surveyed while fishing within the bounds of the Sheboygan River cleanup. The survey reveals the direct spending of anglers on sport fishing in the Sheboygan River. The average Sheboygan angler spends \$146/fishing day at the Sheboygan River. The median expenditure was \$57/fishing day. These values indicate the economic importance of the Sheboygan fishery. The survey revealed that of respondents who were aware of cleanup efforts, about 30% felt the changes (e.g., deeper sections of the river, new vegetation, easier access to fishing sites) improved their sport-fishing experience.

Background

The Sheboygan River Area of Concern (AOC) is one of 43 Great Lakes AOCs identified by the Environmental Protection Agency in 1987 for their environmentally degraded conditions. In 2010, remediation and mitigation efforts began on the

Sheboygan AOC, totaling \$80 million. Completed in June 2013, clean-up efforts included the dredging of 400,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment, habitat and shoreline restoration, and bank stabilization and in-stream habitat projects.

The Survey Method

The survey estimated the economic use values associated with sport fishing on the Sheboygan River. Anglers were asked about their travel expenses, perceptions of how the cleanup affected their fishing experience and demographic information. Only direct spending on angling was calculated; the economic values reported do not include indirect spending (e.g., the expenditures the bait shop has on employees or inventory) or induced spending (e.g., the salaries the bait shop employees spend in the local economy like at the grocery store). The average angler surveyed visits the Sheboygan River 14 times/year, fishes five hours/visit and catches two fish/visit. Almost half (41%) of the respondents live within the area of the Sheboygan ZIP code while 46% live in Wisconsin but outside of Sheboygan. Fewer (13%) respondents reported living out of state.

Distribution of Angler Expenses *Table 1*

Expenditures on Sport Fishing at Sheboygan River	Dollar Amount
Minimum Expenditure	\$2
25 percentile	\$26
50 percentile	\$57
75 percentile	\$154
Maximum Expenditure	\$3,067
Average Expenditure	\$146

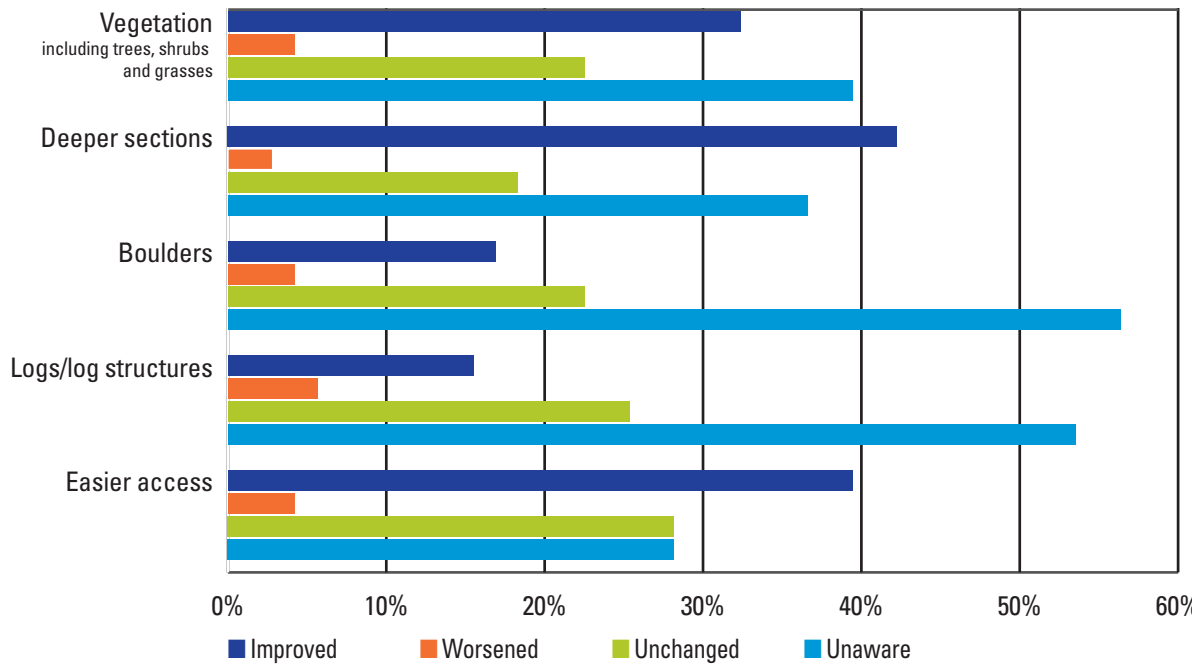
Economic Impacts

The average angler surveyed spent \$146/fishing day at the Sheboygan River with a median expenditure of \$57/fishing day. With an average of \$338, the

Continued



Changes in Angler Fishing Experience *Figure 1*
in Response to New River Features



total expenses of out-of-state anglers were much higher than that of Wisconsin anglers who spent an average of \$116. Table 1 displays the distribution of expenses across anglers. The median value of expenditures, \$57 per angler, per day, presents a more conservative estimate compared to the average value. The median value is comparable to past estimates of direct spending on recreational fishing in the U.S.

The Numbers in Perspective

To put these angler expenditure values into perspective, consider that there are approximately 376,511 angler day visits to Lake Michigan tributary waters in Wisconsin annually. Multiplying the median expenditure value of \$57 of the Sheboygan sport fishery by the total number of angler visitor days at Lake Michigan results in direct spending of \$21,461,127 for the Lake Michigan sport fishery.

This value does not include anglers using charter services because they were not included in the initial survey; an economic study on charter boat fishing is available at seagrant.wisc.edu/Sheboyganecon.

Angler Perceptions of the Cleanup

Of anglers who were aware of the cleanup efforts, about 30% felt the changes (i.e., deeper sections of the river, new vegetation, easier access to fishing sites) improved their sport fishing experience. However, many were unaware (43%) of the new river features. Additional outreach may be needed to make anglers aware of the cleanup. How the anglers described a given change, or new river feature, is reported in *Figure 1*.

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